

R. B. M. D.

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A P P E A L

T O T H E

Royal College of Physicians,

T O U C H I N G

M E D I C A L C A P A C I T Y :

In a LETTER of Thanks to that Learned
SOCIETY, for their late Improvement of the
Pharmacopœia Londinensis.

Res Sacra Miser.

*Quæ fieri enim possit, ut intelligatur Morbi Pathologia, nisi ex
cognitâ prius Partis Structurâ, cui præfixa insedit.*

Dr. NICHOLS's Præfat. Anat. Oeconim.

L O N D O N :

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A P P E A L

TO THE

Royal College of Physicians

MEDICAL CAPACITY:

of the College of Physicians

in the City of London

and of the College of Surgeons

in the City of London

and of the College of Physicians

in the City of London

and of the College of Surgeons

in the City of London

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in the City of London

LONDON.

GENTLEMEN,

GRATITUDE is the chief Motive of my addressing you in this Manner; and I own too, I have a Satisfaction in declaring to the Publick, my Sense of the Service you have done to the World by your late correct Improvement of the *London Dispensatory*. It has a long while been too manifest, that many Articles of our establish'd *Materia Medica* have had Titles bestow'd upon them, which were never supported by Experience; and the Redundancy of Ingredients, in many of our Compositions, with their clashing Inconsistency, have, of late, made the Apothecaries regardless of them as Rules; and substitute their own Ingenuity to prepare the different Forms of all the Medicines, in as seemly a Manner as they cou'd.

But since we are certain, that every Simple, of every Compound, has undergone reiterated Experiments to investigate its distinct Virtue, previous to the establishing a Book of Medicines, which are to be the future Standard of the Practice of Physick in this Nation; we are in no danger of being any longer impos'd upon, from the uncertain Characters of these Things.

Every experienced Physician must know, that the Qualities of Simples have been heretofore deliver'd down to us with such great Confusion and Uncertainty, that not one in Fifty wou'd answer the Character it bore; and that many Things have been applauded for divine Virtues, which have scarcely been en-

dow'd with one single good Property. And, such has been the Rashness, or Credulity of those, who have undertaken to give us the Virtues and Properties of Medicines, that, for the most part, Expectations rais'd upon them, have only tended to disgrace the Physician, and delude the Patient. I therefore congratulate you upon expunging all unnecessary Articles, and removing the officinal Lumber, that the Practice of Physick might hereafter be supply'd with efficacious Medicinal *Canons*, upon the Basis of Experimental Authority. Your Committee's Account of their Proceedings carries all the Marks of tender Care, and great Judgment. Plainness and Perspicuity were always favourable Marks of Truth. But the great Penetration of Mind, and Simplicity of Style, shewn throughout the whole, render all their Arguments convincing at first Sight; and if there be any Fault, it is employing more Learning than the Subject deserves, to trace out the distant Causes of the many ridiculous Errors which have appeared at different Times in it. The Distinction upon Antimonials, which are indissoluble, shews, in one word, an unanswerable Proof against the Use of them. The judicious Caution about the common Use of *Aq. Ceras. n.* in the tender Age of Infants, demonstrates great Humanity and Benevolence; and the present Grounds of Suspicion concerning its bad Effects, are just Reasons for laying aside the Use of it at all. The regulating of the Weights and Measures, and rectifying the ambiguous Meanings of the Terms *Libra* and *Uncia*, are most necessary to adjust the Proportion of all Ingredients in a Composition, or to fix the certain Dose of any Medicine. The ancient Error of Redundancy in Composition, is not only very well accounted for in the Narrative, but all Superfluities of that kind are now carefully retrench'd in the Plan design'd for the *Pharmacopœia* itself; and more particularly with regard to the distill'd Waters. And indeed the Committee have pursued their first Endeavours so accurately, that they have render'd this Work suitable to a rational Practice of Physick, without any Affectation of Wisdom or Mystery. Vigilant Observation and analytical Experiments are certainly the only Means we can depend upon for the true Knowledge of Diseases

Diseases

Diseases or Medicines. Without Experience, the Virtues of the *Bark* had never been known; nor shou'd we ever have discover'd the poisonous Qualities of *Lauro-Cerasus*, *à priori*. And *Microscopical* Enquiries, however entertaining they may be, wou'd never have assisted us towards knowing the different Effects of *Calomel* and *Sublimate*, or taught us the glorious Uses of *Opium* and *Hellebore*. But there can be no room for any one to expatiate upon a Subject you have already finish'd; and with such beneficial Consequences to the Publick, that I begin to hope the same benevolent Disposition may induce you likewise in due time, to rectify some of the grossest Irregularities, with regard to the Qualifications of those who practise the Art of Physick.

The College of Physicians has been always look'd upon as the legal Guardians of the People's Health in this Nation; and for that Purpose it is vested with ample Power to convene before them, and commit to Prison, even without Bail, all Delinquents for Male-Practice in Physick. And yet notwithstanding all this extraordinary Authority, perhaps there is not a City where such Numbers of Persons presume to practise this Art with that Irregularity they do in this Metropolis: Inasmuch, that an Abuse of that Art, which was first intended to relieve the Miseries of Mankind, at present threatens to become the greatest Destruction to Health and long Life. Therefore, since popular Credulity rises so high as to follow any prevailing Opinions, and when a daring Confidence is all that is necessary to propagate those Opinions, it seems a critical Time for Authority to interpose, and to admonish the People of their Danger by proper Restraints. For all the vulgar Opinions concerning the Benefits arising from the Art of Physick, stand upon magical or superstitious Notions; and unless some immediate Success, or the Appearances of it, follow the Administration of Medicines, it will never be in the Power of the ablest Practitioners to make the People sensible of any slow rational Proceedings. As Ignorance was always the Mother of their Devotion, so the Fear of Death amongst them is the only Support of Physick. And if it has been thought good Policy, in all civiliz'd Countries, to protect

protect the Weak and Innocent from the crafty Designs of evil Men, it must be so in the Case of Medical Imposture, especially considering Sicknes always levels wise Men with Fools; and where, tho' the Folly of many is invincible, the Means of indulging it to their own Destruction may be removed in a good measure. And upon this Foundation stands the late Sanctorial Act of *Mortmain*, which, with as great Goodness as Wisdom, has constrain'd weak unwary Minds from committing irrevocable Folly with respect to their Properties.

I am sensible there are some, who, on account of Uncertainty in the Art of Physick itself, from some uncommon Success of certain Empirical Nostrums, are apt to imagine it as unjust and impolitic to disturb Men for their different Opinions in Physick, as it certainly is to persecute them for religious Notions. But, though Charity shou'd always incline us to think favourably of all Mens Intentions in either Cases, publick Wisdom has ever thought fit to guard against all such Delusions, as plainly affect the Health and Peace of a Society. And, surely! every one, who has a just Concern for the Happiness of Mankind, wou'd desire to have some publick Test required, that might exclude all vain, ignorant Coxcombs from the Practice of an Art, which so nearly affects the Life or Health of Man, as does the Administration of internal Medicines. Nor wou'd any honest, sensible Man think it any Hardship upon him, to be obliged to qualify himself with some sort of competent Knowledge, in a Business he propos'd to employ his whole Time in; because Truth and real Knowledge always ease the Mind of those Doubts and Fears which attend upon Ignorance or Guilt.

No one wou'd presume to dictate to his Superiors; but any one might hope to be excus'd for proposing a few Hints for their Consideration, with due Deference and Respect, on a Point of the highest Consequence to Mankind.

The sagacious Dr. Sydenham, who first taught us a rational Use of the *Bark*, and gave us the best Management of the Small-Pox, expressly declares Anatomy to be the * *Lapis Lydius* of

* Vide P. 458. Op. omnia.

of a Physician; without which no one shou'd dare to practise either Physick or Surgery. And, indeed, what is more consonant to Reason and common Sense, than that the Person, who professes to adjust the several Disorders of a Machine, shou'd be well acquainted with the Make and Structure of it? Without this fundamental Principle, it is impossible to form any useful Ideas of the Animal Oeconomy; or be any ways qualified to distinguish Symptoms from Diseases, when uncommon Appearances arise from a Connection of Parts. Wherefore one frequently meets with insufficient People, who even mistake the proper Symptoms of one Disease for another Disease; and then, as Error is endless, fancy they have discover'd something new to add to the Catalogue of Distempers, already too long for the most Judicious. And in the Country, at any Distance from Town, every body is obliged, in the most difficult Cases, to put himself under the Direction of Men, who do not so much as pretend to other Abilities in Physick or Surgery, than what they cou'd acquire from a bare Apprenticeship to some Master, who had employ'd them in the Labour of pulverizing Drugs, &c. And, as Matters stand at present, there descends down to Posterity a Succession of Artificers, who very rarely are found to have so much Anatomy as a Butcher; and are so far from being able to satisfy you about the Parts affected in your Distemper, that, for the most part, they cannot resolve you on which Side of the Abdomen the Liver is seated. The whole of these Mens Knowledge is plainly confined to the Names of Distempers, and their Masters old Receipts; without any one good Rule whereby they might possibly improve themselves by even the most extensive Business. So that they never can do better than boldly and mechanically direct those Medicines to the Names of Distempers, not to the Distempers themselves; which should always be treated as variously and differently, as are the Causes and Constitutions from whence they proceed. A Cholick, a Diabetes, and a Rheumatism, are Distempers that arise from very different Causes, at different Times; and it is very obvious, the most pompous Medicines prescribed to the Name of either of them, without distinguish-
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ing upon the different Causes and Symptoms, wou'd be very far from answering the curative Intentions. Besides, this common Method must be extremely hazardous to Life, on account that some of our worst Maladies are not yet rank'd under proper Denominations. And thus seeing the longest Time, and the largest Practice, can never make these Men wiser above Trifles, without some original Plan to build upon; it must certainly be the truest Compassion and Charity to Mankind, to oblige all such inferior Practitioners to produce a *Testimonial*, under the Hand of some known *Anatomist*, that they had regularly attended one Course of Anatomy (at least) before they presumed to act as Surgeons, or visit the Sick as Apothecaries. This, or some such necessary Distinction, wou'd enable the People in general to make a better Choice of their Physicians, than by mere Fancy, or Fame itself. And if there is not already Power enough vested in the College to reach all Country Dealers in Physick, I wish such Authority might be procured for the Service of the Publick; and that this Hint only may occasion some future Consideration. Were we seriously to reflect upon the Value we set upon Life, when in Danger of losing it by Sicknes; and to think, at the same time, of the Insufficiency of our common Help; it wou'd soon determine us, in our best State of Health, to be zealous in promoting all such Regulations, as might be thought proper to improve our common medical Assistance. Physick is a Practical Art; and if it is not exercised by some Rule of Knowledge, the World had better be without it. It is plain, the People in general can never be able to judge of the Merit of any Practitioner, but by Fame or Success, both which are very fallible Rules; therefore it appears to be absolutely necessary and convenient, that a proper Authority shou'd direct their Choice, by such Distinctions as may answer all the Purposes of a good general Rule, and thereby render the Lives of many People less precarious. At present it is most certainly no question, that Physick, in the Country, does more harm than good to the Health and Lives of the People; and unless some Method is found out to check the Abuses of it, every Man, who is able to contemplate the *Animal*

mal Automaton, and can perceive how wisely it is contrived for Self-preservation, will soon think it more eligible to rely upon the ordinary Calls of Nature in Sickneſs, than to take any internal Medicines at all. And, above all things, I wou'd recommend this Phyſical Abſtinence to Hypochondriacal, Low-ſpirited Patients, who are never to be well reliev'd or cured without all ſorts of ſtrict Temperance, join'd to Exerciſe in open Air. But here I will alſo note for their ſake, That the beſt choſen Exerciſe will always fail of its Purpoſes, if it be only purſued in one and the ſame Place, even though that Place ſhou'd be remarkably ſituated in the beſt Air. It is diverſify'd Exerciſe in different Places, which renders it the moſt certain *Sanical Cure*, for all thoſe Diſorders of the Body, where the Mind labours under any uneaſy Paſſions. And it is a *Tour* only, which exhibits the greateſt Variety of Objects, that can cure the moſt chronical Caſes of this kind, not the bare Changes of Air. Therefore the *Valetudinarian* muſt always look upon this compound Exerciſe as the true *Elixir* of Health, for the Mind as well as for his Body. It is true, no Diſorder happens to us, but there is, at the ſame time, a natural *Conatus* to throw it off. But when this Endeavour in Nature is oppreſſ'd and ſtifled by injudicious Industry, inſtead of being critically aſſiſted, What Chance can Nature have to overcome a Diſtemper enforced by a Load of Phyſick? Nature left to herſelf will do Wonders, eſpecially if you know how to avoid all things that are hurtful; for, as a Perſon of ſprightly Parts often expreſſes it, *Keep off Swords and Guns, and it will require a vaſt deal to kill a Man. Natura duci poſtulat ſe, non trahi.* But while we are thus contending for proper Diſtinctions of Medical Capacity, we muſt particularly deſire our Superiors to guard us againſt all the Pretenſions of falſe Philoſophy, under the Shape of *Hypotheſes*, which flouriſh'd ſo much in the laſt Century. Nor let us admit, that any Sort of Literature is neceſſary to the Art of Healing Diſtempers, but what has ſome real Affinity to it. For the Subject-matter of Enquiry after the Abilities of every Perſon, ſhou'd relate only to the Principles and Practice of the

Art of Physick itself. Learning, and all the Appearances of it, was always the known Idol of the People: And from hence crafty Men have taken the Hint, in all Ages, and in all Professions, to impose upon them Wonders and Absurdities. Nothing but this popular Bigotry to every thing that is mysterious, cou'd ever have tempted the profound *Greshamite*, some Years ago, to publish to the World his abstruse Theory, that equally accounted for muscular Motion, and all the Passions of the Mind, by the Operation of *Bilious Salts*. And as Knowledge at best, amongst the Bulk of Mankind, is little better than mere animal Perception, the titular Author of the Hypothesis of *Acid* and *Alkali* presumed in his Day upon that Bottom, and did Wonders. But of all the sinister Arts which have been made use of to acquire a Fame for Knowledge that Men did not really possess, there never was one that succeeded so well, as did the Antiquarian Learning about Thirty and Forty Years ago, when Swarms of *Virtuosi* were recommended into all Parts of the Country under the Denomination of Learned Physicians. And it was then thought that the Nation was stock'd with this Class of Men, as Physicians, in order to recompense them for their fruitless Labours, under their great Patron *, in Studies directly opposite to the Knowledge of the Animal Oeconomy, or any Part of the Curative Art.

It is a national Reflection, that we want sufficient Schools of Physick at Home, to prevent our Students from spending their Money Abroad under foreign Professors, to the manifest Loss of our own Country. And that by far the greatest Part of our most Eminent and Learned Physicians of this Time have had their Physick Education in foreign Universities. But whatever may be said in favour of the Institutional Method of Schools abroad, we have always had the Character of producing the best Physicians in *Europe*. And it is certain, that no Physicians, at Home or Abroad, have made that Figure in their Profession, as those who have prescribed for our Hospitals at *London*; and it must undoubtedly be owing to their large and extensive

* Sir H. S. who then presided over all Sorts of Literature.

extensive Fund of Experience, that we have so many distinguish'd Characters in the Art of Healing. Therefore I offer it as one Point worthy of Consideration, How far these Hospitals, and all inferior Places of the like kind in this City, might be render'd subservient to a Physick Education, by admitting Ten times the Number of Pupils they do at present, under such Restrictions, as wou'd prevent all sorts of Disorder and Inconveniency. So that the same good and godly Benefactions, which have rais'd the best Nurseries in the World for the Sick and Wounded, may also be improved farther into the best Schools for the Art of Physick and Surgery. And as there are many internal Diseases which must require a competent Degree of Knowledge of external Diseases, to afford, by Analogy, a clearer Idea of them; it wou'd be highly advantageous to the Student, inasmuch as a Course of the best Practice of Surgery might be attended to at one and the same time. And I have known several Gentlemen, who have been abroad, that have given the Preference of that great Anatomist Dr. *Nicholl's* Physiological Lectures, and an Attendance, at the same time, upon the Practice of our Hospitals, to any foreign Education whatsoever. But I am persuaded, that if many of those Gentlemen of the Faculty, who have spent much time upon learned Dissertations and abstracted Speculations, had bestow'd a little more of their Time in studying to promote the good Economy of the Profession, we might have expected some Scheme, before this time, to remove all Causes for these Reflections.

It is equally the Interest and Concern of those in the highest Rank amongst us, as much as the lowest Order of the People, to encourage a Physick Education. For, as no Person is able to make any proper Judgment of his Physician's Abilities in his Profession, who is not himself qualified to be a Physician; all Men from the highest to the lowest, are liable to mistake great Proficiency in the Mathematicks, or great Skill in the Languages and other learned Sciences, for Medical Capacity; especially, as these Qualifications are frequently rewarded with a

Physick

Physick Degree from either of our own Universities.* And altho' Men of distinguish'd Learning in the Profession of Physick have applied mathematical Calculations to the Art, in hopes of raising it to a Science; yet, for want of necessary *Data*, they have only served to furnish out a sort of learned, plausible Turn of reasoning; which is equally as delusive as *Hypotheses*, and tend only to mislead the Student from the only Means of learning the Knowledge of Distempers by diligent, exact, well-weigh'd Observations. Nor can any sort of Principles enable a Physician to make such Judgment of Diseases, as will justify his Practice, but a good Knowledge of the human Oeconomy, and a just Reasoning thereupon, from the outward, sensible Appearances, to their internal and remote Originals. It is this Capacity and Skill in reasoning, which is all the *Theory* in Physick that can ever assist us, when any new Species of Diseases arise, or difficult Symptoms attend the same Disease. But this slow and laborious Method ill suits some Men of Genius, whose Minds are possess'd with immoderate Zeal after Eminence in their Profession, and who are too apt to despise the Examination of Things by Sense and Experiment, as being too gross and ignoble. Physick is not the Effect of human Invention. It owes its Birth to a diligent, accurate, and judicious Observation of Nature; and the Knowledge of it does not consist in a lively Imagination, or that certain Power of the Mind, which is most inquisitive after the obscure Operations of Nature. Necessity produced it, and Experience must bring it to Perfection. But yet it is notorious, that some of our modern Physicians have shewn by their publick Writings, that they are more ambitious to appear in the Character of learned Men, than good Physicians upon this true Basis of Experience and Observation. And this learned Pride has push'd them upon several particular Attempts and Essays in that Strain, which have met with severe Censure. For Instance: What Services have those labour'd Computations done, which were made by *Kell* and

* *Equè Pauperibus prodest, Locupletibus aequè
Equè neglectum Pueris, Senibusque nocebit.*

and *Borelli*, concerning the Force which the Heart exerts at every *Systole*? when their two Calculations appear to be as different, as Pounds are to Ounces. And the same *Borelli*, in attempting to account for the great Quantity of *Bile*, separated by the biliary Ducts of the Liver, draws a mathematical Conclusion, That there is discharg'd into the *Duodenum* thirty-four Pounds of bilious Juice, by the *Ductus communis*, in twenty-four Hours. Whereas Dr. *Keil*, from a more just Calculation upon the same Problem, concludes that no more than two Drachms pass that Duct in one Hour, or six Ounces in a Day. Thus, by assuming *Posulata*, no ways to be granted, the two greatest Mathematicians in the Profession of Physick, have drawn just Inferences, which yet are to the last degree repugnant to Fact, Experience, and common Sense. Again, from what other Principle, but that of the Pride of Learning, cou'd proceed some later Disquisitions concerning the superior Dignity of Physicians or Surgeons? When, after all the great Learning which has appeared on both sides this important Question, the Precedency in dispute might at any time be best determin'd, either by considering the Degrees of Merit, or Priority of the Arts. Both Professions claim the same Divine Old Man for their common Master; and some People aver for Truth, that *Hippocrates* was more conversant in the Art of Surgery, than in the Administration of internal Medicines. *Physick* and *Surgery* must at least be acknowledg'd to be *Twin-Sisters*; and if an exact Scrutiny was to be made, *Surgery* perhaps might be found to be the *Elder* of the Two; as Mankind were doubtless expos'd to *external* Hurts and Injuries, before they were liable to *inward* Decays in their Constitutions. But all Pretensions to Superiority ought to be superseded in a *common* Cause, so far as whatever is a *joint* Concern might be conducted with an *unanimous* and *joint* Concurrence. Otherwise the Practice of Medicine, by reason of this near Affinity of the Professions, cou'd not well be carried on to the beneficial Purposes of the Publick. I have mention'd these learned Controversies, because I am a Well-wisher to the Art of Physick, so far as it is useful to Mankind; and never desire to see the Credit of any Branch of it

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disputed!

disputed by Criticks in ancient Learning; seeing, in most Cases, it may be so dextrously managed, as to render any Question doubtful and puzzling. And, for my own part, whenever I see any Piece of mere intricate Learning applied to the pretended Service of any Art, which depends upon Matters of Fact for its Improvement, I immediately suspect there cannot be any other Meaning, than to raise it above common Capacity, in order to dignify it into political Mystery. This false Ambition of supporting the Honour of the Profession of Physick by the means of critical Learning, or mathematical Principles, without *Data*, can only be building the Temple of *Æsculapius* upon a sandy Bottom. And yet, so long as this Itch after learned Fame possesses the Minds of our greatest Men in the Profession, we must never expect those, who are most able to do it, will ever publish their practical Observations to the World; since the Scholar, and a fine Stile, in some learned Language, will always appear to more advantage upon Theoretical Subjects, than in a faithful, plain Narration of the Symptoms and Cure of Diseases: And therefore, altho' perhaps there never was an Age when there were greater Numbers of learned Physicians than at present, yet there never were fewer good Writers upon practical Subjects of the Profession.

But now, Gentlemen, as I have taken much Liberty with all Orders of Men in the Profession, I must appeal to you, as the Guardians and supreme Judges of Physick, whether I have discharg'd myself with due Regard to Truth and good Manners? You are most sensible of the vast Importance of Truth, and of the horrible Consequences proceeding from erroneous Theories in Physick; and I know the common Practisers are always influenced by prevailing Opinions, without requiring much Evidence; and that the Name of Philosophy, and chemical Jargon, will ever be their most darling *Idols*. Hence therefore I hope you will excuse my Application to you in behalf of Regular *Testimonials*, to be granted upon such Conditions as you shall think most expedient, to rectify the general bad Practice of Physick. For, tho' I am far from thinking your *Permissions*, or any other titular Productions, will ever prove any adequate

Test

Test of Abilities; yet I am very certain they will be a *per* Means to excite Emulation, and make Men more desirous of that Knowledge, which, they know, one time or another they must be obliged to give some account of. And were our Students in Physick suffer'd to attend the Hospitals, as practical Schools in the utmost Latitude, it wou'd be the most worthy Improvement of those noble Charities, without interfering at all with the pious Intentions of their Founders. And were such Anatomical and Physiologival Lectures, as are now carried on by Dr. *Lawrence*, and others, duly pursued, and regularly join'd with that Attendance, I dare venture to assert, that such an Education wou'd soon remove from us all Causes of Reproach, and prevent vast Sums of Money being spent abroad for this Purpose.

I am far from pretending to the Talents of a Projector in any Affairs; but as these various Thoughts and Observations have occur'd to my Mind, since I was resolv'd to give publick Testimony of my Gratitude to the Learned President and Fellows of the College of Physicians, for their excellent Plan of a new Dispensatory, I am tempted to offer them as promiscuous Hints, arising from the Power of *Philanthropy*, and my sincere Wishes for the Reputation of your Faculty being,

GENTLEMEN,

With the highest Esteem,

Your most obedient,

humble Servant,

W. B. M. D.

